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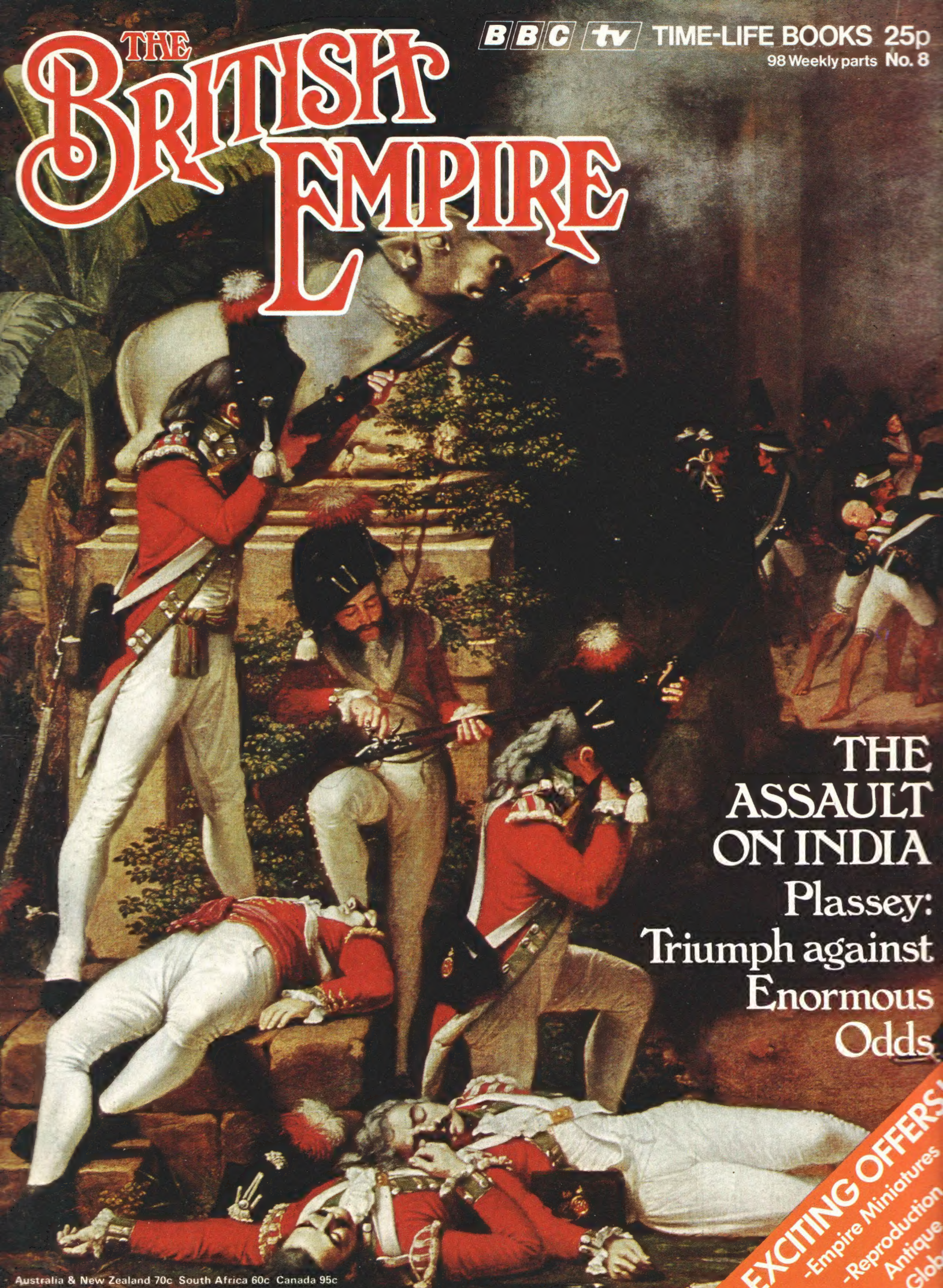

THE ASSAULT ON INDIA

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THE BRITISH EMPIRE

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98 Weekly parts **No. 8**

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MICHAEL EDWARDES, the author of the text sections in this issue, is an authority on British India. His work *British India, 1772–1947* was the basis for a TV series entitled *Raj*. His other books include *A History of India*, *The Last Years of British India*, *Battles of the Indian Mutiny* and *Bound to Exile*, and his latest work is an assessment of East-West trade. He is also a well-known broadcaster on Asian affairs.

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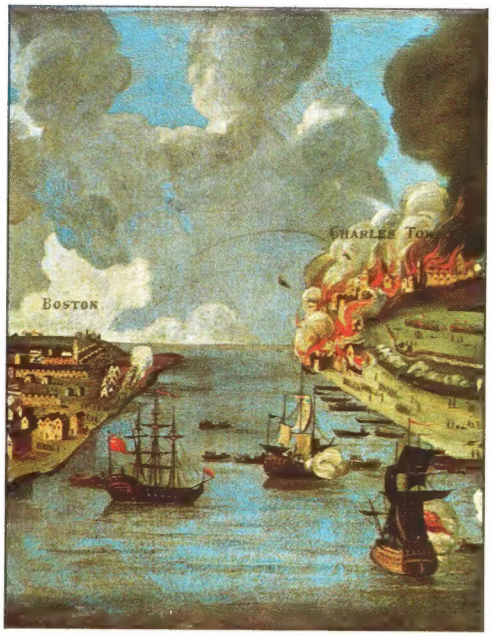

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Issue No. 10: World War. The revolt of the American colonists opened the floodgates of a world-wide struggle only resolved at Waterloo after nearly 40 years of war.

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THE ASSAULT ON INDIA

By Michael Edwardes

On August 25, 1751, a diminutive East India Company force of 300 native soldiers and 200 British bravely armed with three small cannon, headed inland from the British base at Madras to save Britain's settlements in southern India from falling to the French.

Great hopes went with the little band. Elsewhere in southern India, the French either held the balance of power or seemed on the point of seizing it. For six years now the British had been fighting the French in India in an Eastern version of the War of the Austrian Succession which convulsed Europe. In India, too, it was a struggle for succession – the succession to power over the whole subcontinent – and it was a struggle which was to last on and off for another 70 years.

The French East India Company, founded in 1664, had established a number of trading agencies in India. The main ones were at Pondicherry 85 miles down the eastern "Coromandel" coast from the British at Madras; and at Chandernagore in Bengal, 16 miles up the River Hugli from the English settlement at Calcutta. Until about 1720 relations between the British and French companies in India were reasonably cordial. But trade and international politics could not be separated for long. Concerned over increasing French competition, the directors in London asked if the government would send a fleet to India, to sweep French vessels from the Indian seas.

In 1744, when war broke out, the government agreed. A blow at France in India was almost as good as a blow against France in Europe, and the East India commerce, which brought in more than 10 per cent of Britain's public revenue, was worth protecting.

So the English dispatched six vessels which, en route to India, began their tasks auspiciously by capturing four French ships. It was not much – but it was enough to incense the French Governor, Joseph François Dupleix, who was waiting for just such an excuse to sweep the British from India.

Long before Dupleix had been appointed to take charge of France's possessions in India in 1742, he had dreamed of creating a French Empire in India. He believed he could achieve his ambitions within the tangled skein of Indian politics by intrigue, for which he had talent amounting almost to genius. Over the years he had acquired considerable knowledge of the realities of local politics. With the aid of his wife, who though European by descent had been born in and brought up in India, he set up an intelligence service with fine sources of information at all the important courts in India.

His was a complex game, for no Indian ruler, other than the Emperor himself, had absolute powers to withhold or grant authority. Each ruler owed nominal allegiance to a higher power. Thus both the English in Madras and the French in Pondicherry were dependent on the Nawab or Governor of the Carnatic province, who himself owed allegiance to the ruler of Hyderabad. With the death of the last of the great Mughal

emperors, Aurangzeb, in 1707, this chain of allegiances, often only nominal, began to collapse even more. This was the weakness which Dupleix sought to exploit.

He first turned his attention to the British in Madras. He won the support of the Nawab by promising him the town if the French were victorious. In 1746, the French, strengthened by a fleet from home, bombarded Madras. One shell burst open a liquor store, and the British garrison decided to drown its sorrows instead of fighting. After three days the Governor surrendered.

Dupleix, with bewildering duplicity, then turned his small European force against his Indian ally, the Nawab. The two French cannon, firing 15 rounds a minute, ripped through the Nawab's 10,000 undisciplined troops and rapidly routed them. This encounter showed the enormous superiority of well-made and well-handled guns over cavalry, and of the musket and bayonet over the badly tempered sword and the pike. Native India, apparently, was ripe for the taking.

Peace in Europe brought a halt to fighting between French and English in India; the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748 handed Madras back to Britain, and Dupleix's eyes once again turned towards native India.

His first act was to put in his own nominee as Governor of the defeated Carnatic – a success so easily achieved that he looked farther afield, to Hyderabad itself. In 1748, the ruler of Hyderabad, in whose dominions the Carnatic lay, had died, and there was a dispute between two of his sons for the succession. Supported by a body of French troops under a brilliant soldier, Charles de Bussy, Dupleix placed his own man on the throne of Hyderabad as well.

Dupleix's objective was simple: to surround Madras with French-controlled territory and squeeze out the English. In self-defence, the English took up the French game and decided to replace the French-nominated Governor of the Carnatic with their own man.

The most suitable candidate was Muhammad Ali, the son of the former Governor, who was besieged by French and Indian enemies, in his rock fortress of Trichinopoly, 200 miles south of Madras. The English decided to go to his aid.

The spirit was there: the Company's small bodies of troops had recently been welded together into battalions by the founder of the Indian Army, Major Stringer Lawrence. But how was aid to be sent? The forces were few, and a direct 200-mile march south to Trichinopoly would be to court disaster from the French and their native allies.

It was left to a young soldier, Robert Clive, to suggest a diversion would draw troops away from Trichinopoly. Why not, he said, make an attempt to capture the town of Arcot, the capital of Dupleix's puppet Governor, only 65 miles inland.

It was the kind of bold, risky thinking that the Company had come to expect from Clive. Back in Shropshire, this son of an impoverished squire had proved a problem: he once organized a protection racket which terrorized local shopkeepers. There was only one thing to be done with him: at 18, he was shipped off to India. He arrived in Madras in 1744 as a writer (or clerk) in the Company's service. He had arrived virtually penniless and without friends. He disliked his job, and was so quick to take offence at anything he believed affected his honour that he was left alone by most of his colleagues who feared his temper.

In despair, Clive attempted to commit suicide. On one occasion after his pistol misfired twice in succession, he was reported to have said "Well, I am reserved for something." Release from a tedious and constricting life came with the French attack on Madras in 1746. He was transferred to military duties, and with others, was taken prisoner. He escaped by blacking his face and putting on Indian clothes, and made his way to Fort St. David, on the coast 100 miles south of Madras and now the Company's last outpost on the Coromandel coast.

There, his outbursts of temper convinced some that he was mad. Others, observing his quick thinking and vigorous action, saw a natural guerrilla leader. Both opinions were right. Clive would often retire into what his contemporaries called "melancholy," to emerge decisive,

Marquis Dupleix (above), the outstanding French Governor in 18th-Century India, was a man whose restless political genius rivalled that of Napoleon. Though he ruled only a tiny blob of territory – the fortified station of Pondicherry – Dupleix schemed for a great empire in south India at the expense of the British.

Muhammad Ali (below) was helped to win the throne of the Carnatic by the British in 1751, in order to frustrate Dupleix's scheme of installing pro-French nawabs to rule the southern provinces of the Mughal Empire.

The once mighty Mughal – often spelt Mogul – Empire was fast crumbling by the mid-18th Century when this map was drawn. Though Bengal remained intact, the southern provinces were wracked by intrigue and rebellion. And round the edge of this decaying mass, in outposts like Surat, Bombay, Madras, Pondicherry, European traders awaited their chance to seize power and wealth.

bold, and bursting with frenetic energy. It was in such a state that Clive, now a Captain, put forward to his superiors the daring proposition that he should take a force and capture Arcot. Clive pointed out that even if he were unsuccessful in taking the town, the unexpected appearance of a British force during the monsoon rains – when such roads as there were had been washed away – would surely frighten the besiegers of Trichinopoly into sending troops to Arcot.

On August 31, after six days' march, Clive and his force had covered 55 miles and were within ten miles of the city. The fort, they learned, was held by over 1,000 men, But the swift movement of the English force, marching "unconcerned through a violent storm of thunder, lightning and rain" – as the spies reported – so impressed the garrison that they "lost all heart, and under the combined influence of superstition and cowardice" fled from the city. On September 12, when Clive's force arrived, it entered, in the words of a soldier who was with the expedition, "without opposition through the town, amidst a million spectators whose looks betrayed them traytors, notwithstanding their pretended friendship and dirty presents."

The soldier exaggerated, but there were at least 100,000 people in the town. Clive bought their friendship, or at least neutrality, by forbidding looting, and kept only the guns and a large quantity of powder and shot left behind by the garrison when it fled.

No sooner was Clive in possession of the fort than news came that the fleeing Arcot garrison had met up with reinforcements and was considering an attack. Clive immediately sallied out, about midnight, "observing profound silence," and reached the enemy's camp without being seen. The enemy were caught completely by surprise. "So great was their confusion that tho' we went through the middle of 'em they fired very few shots against us." Clive returned to the fort as silently as he had left it.

But Clive could do no more than harass the enemy, who now began to besiege the fort. Despite the numbers ranged against him, Clive made continuous raids on the enemy camp throughout the 53-day siege, and he had no difficulty in sending messengers through the enemy lines. On October 21 he wrote to Madras to say that he hoped to hold the fort and that any reinforcement sent would have to be relatively strong. "No less than one thousand Blacks and two hundred Europeans can attempt to relieve him as the enemy's situation is strong and their numbers increase daily."

But help was to come first from another quarter. The leader of 6,000 Marathas, who had been raiding in the area, announced that he was going to Clive's aid, apparently purely out of admiration for "such brave men as the defenders of Arcot, whose behaviour had now convinced him that the English could fight."

When this news reached the besiegers, they mounted a major assault on the fort. To break down the gates they used elephants with large spikes fixed to their heads, but a hail of musket-fire so stung the great beasts that they turned and dashed into the besiegers' own lines. In the confusion, the French force was repulsed. Two days later the siege was raised. Clive emerged from the fort immediately and, aided by the Maratha troops, completed his victory.

News of the ending of the siege and the victory spread rapidly. It was not only the Maratha Chief who found Clive's activities instructive. The English, too, learned a lesson. When the Governor of Madras wrote to his employers in London, he pointed out that the military weakness of the Indian princes was now plain – "and 'tis certain any European nation resolved to war on them with a tolerable force may overrun the whole country."

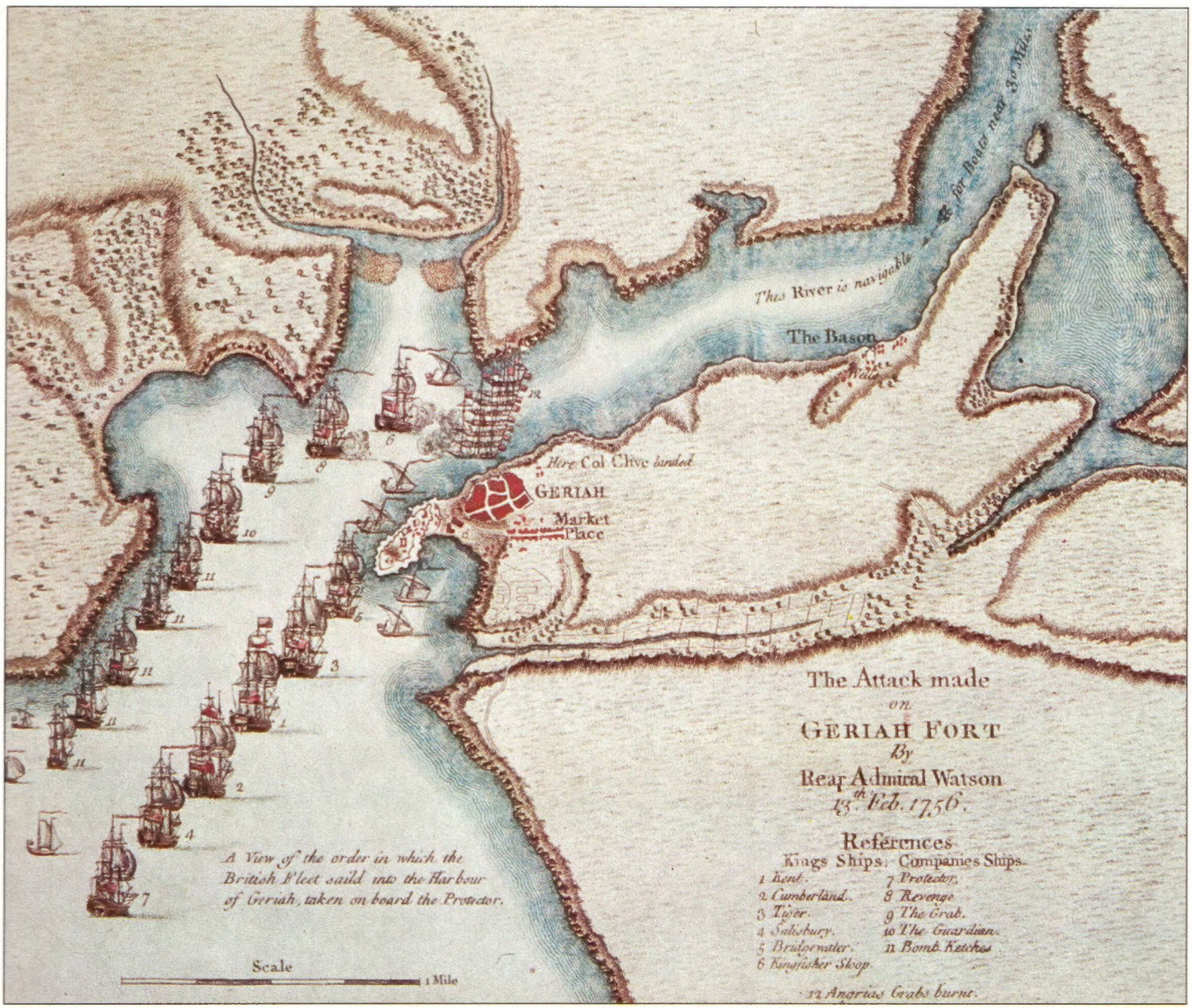
Robert Clive transformed the East India Company, his employer, from a mere trading enterprise dependent upon Indian princes into a dramatically successful instrument of Empire.

Hidden Menace of the Malabar Coast

A little over 150 miles south of Bombay stood Fort Geriah, a pirate stronghold (shown on the map below) which struck fear into any sailor who travelled near that western shore of India known as the "Malabar" coast. Sheltered in a creek from the monsoons of the Indian Ocean and the attentions of prying men-of-war, Geriah was the fabled headquarters of Indian sea-robbers who for more than half the 18th Century plundered the shipping of European traders, especially the British. Faced with massive losses, the East India Company tried to stamp out the menace, but with little success. Chicken-hearted captains, ill-designed ships whose gun-ports were so low that their cannon could only fire into the water 20 yards away, drunken crews, a pasty riff-raff of troops whose officers were mere clerks strutting about in uniforms – all these ensured failure, often abject failure.

But Robert Clive's impressive victories over the French in the early 1750s generated a new aggressive mood at Company Headquarters in Bombay. When in 1756 the pirate chief, Tulaji Angria, offered a safe-conduct pass to the British as a conciliatory gesture, the Governor wrote him a peremptory note of refusal. "Can you imagine," he asked incredulously, "that the English will ever submit to take passes from any Indian nation? We grant passes, but would take none from anybody." Instead he dispatched the most powerful force ever to leave Bombay, and hastily arranged to co-operate with the neighbouring Maratha tribesmen. Clive commanded the British land forces, bulge-eyed Admiral Watson, newly arrived from Britain, the navy.

On February 11 the fleet sailed up to Fort Geriah, only to find the Marathas already encamped there in eager expectation of the spoils. But the British acted smartly. They opened up with their 32-pounders, subjecting the fort to a hail of iron. Angria's navy was set on fire. In the evening Clive landed, throwing his army between the Marathas and the fort. Consequently, when Geriah surrendered next day, he was first in and, as well as removing another threat to British security, he secured all the contents of the treasury – £130,000 worth of gold, silver and jewels – as booty for the British.



II. Into the Black Hole

Clive's success led to the relief of Trichinopoly in 1752 and the death of the French-sponsored Governor of the Carnatic. With him also died Dupleix's hopes. His policy in ruins, Dupleix was ordered to return home in 1754.

After Clive's coup at Arcot and the collapse of Dupleix's hopes, both sides made their preparations for a renewal of the conflict. De Bussy was busily consolidating his position in Hyderabad and the English gathered their strength in Madras. But before the British could move, the Company was faced with a crisis elsewhere, this time in Bengal.

On August 16, 1756, news reached Madras that the Company's settlement at Calcutta had been captured by one of the armies of a native prince, now despised by the British.

The crisis in Bengal was only partially a product of recent events in the south. Since the death of the Emperor Aurangzeb in 1707, the Mughal Empire, which had once covered most of India, had slowly begun to fall apart. Men who had once been the governors of Mughal provinces began to assert their independence. Dupleix had been quick to realize that in so fluid a situation, the French could move into positions of power. Indian rulers were well aware of what was going on, and some feared the Europeans while others looked to them as potential allies. In Bengal, the ruling class was Muslim by faith and not generally popular, as the majority of the people were Hindus. The authority of the ruling class rested on force and the support of merchants and bankers, most of whom were Hindus and had profited from the trade of the Europeans. When war between Bengal and the Company threatened that trade, the Hindus were to prove more loyal to the source of their wealth – the Europeans – than to their own Muslim rulers.

All had been reasonably well in Bengal until 1756. The Nawab, who was an able and strong-minded ruler, had kept everyone in order, including the Europeans. When, for example, the English began to dig a moat round Fort William, Calcutta, in 1743, he had ordered them to stop. "You are merchants," he told them. "What need have you of a fortress? Being under my protection, you have no enemies to fear." But after 1748, the French and the English were preparing for their next war, and the English Company ordered its Governor in Calcutta to fortify his post in defiance of the Nawab. Their spirit inflamed by Clive's victories in the south, the English, always naïve about Indian politics, became insolent and belligerent as well. Though technically the Nawab's tenants, they acted as if they had sovereign rights, even giving sanctuary to persons accused of crimes in the Nawab's territory. Just before the Nawab's death in April, 1756, they granted asylum to one Krishna Das, who had been implicated in a conspiracy to seize the throne for a ruler not of the old man's choosing.

The new Nawab, Siraj-ud-daula, was weak and headstrong. Contrary to expectation, he succeeded without opposition. "The violent character of Siraj-ud-daula and the general hatred for him," wrote the French merchant, Jean Law, "had given many people the idea that he could never become ruler. Among others the English thought so."

To make matters worse, their attempts at fortifying Calcutta were feeble and inadequate. Walls were left uncompleted, or were overlooked by houses. Gunpowder was allowed to become damp in the magazines, the guns to go rusty. Yet the English continued with their provocations, even after the Nawab had suppressed the opposition to him within his own family. Despite demands from the Nawab, the British refused to give up Krishna Das. There were rumours that he had paid certain British officials very well for his protection.

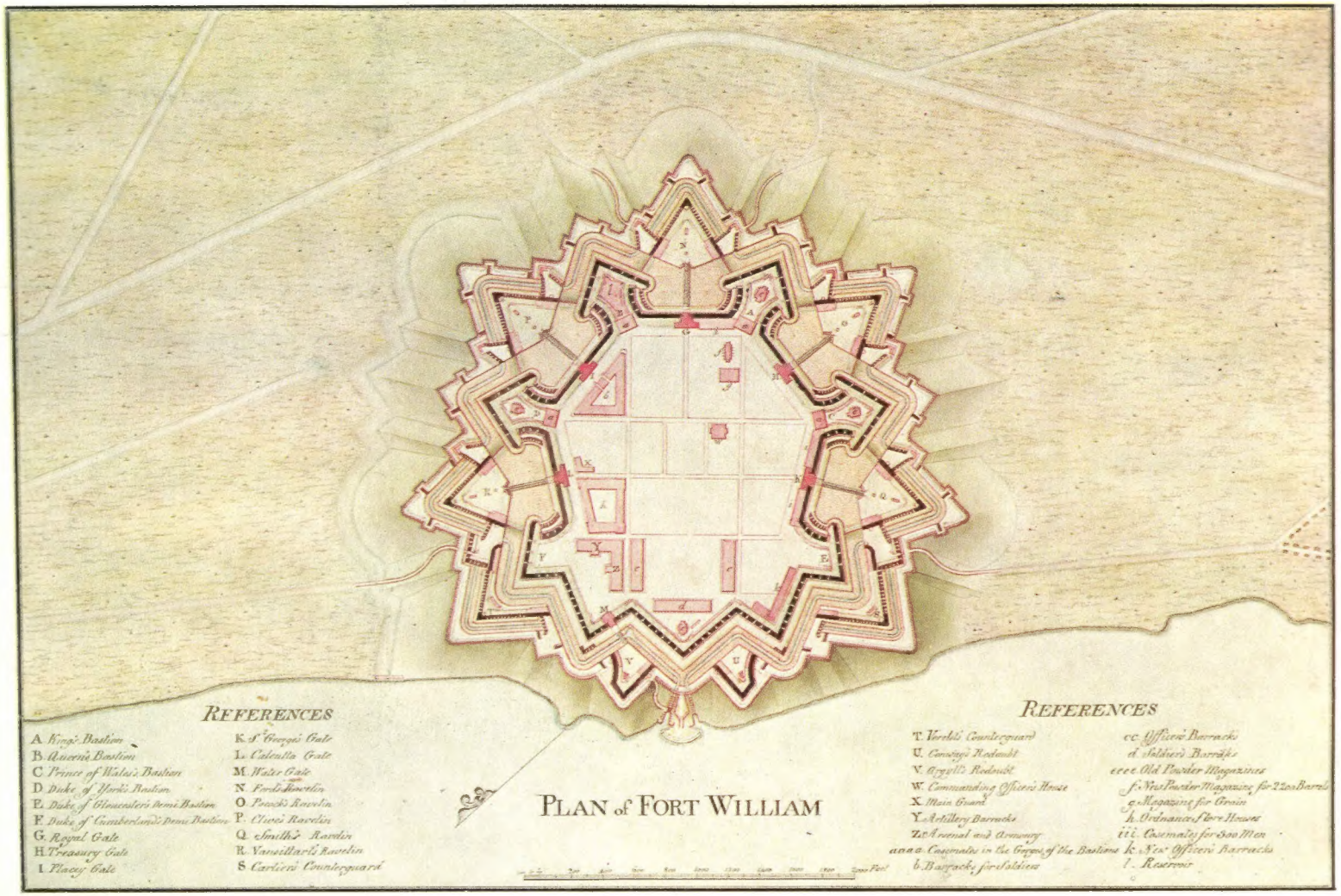
The English in Calcutta were divided by personal enmities. The Governor, Roger Drake, was disliked by everyone, primarily because after his wife's death he had married her sister. This, one merchant wrote, "could never be forgiven him, for the crime was not only itself bad but . . . [afterwards] every man of character and sense shunned and avoided him, and was the means of his running after and keeping very indifferent company and of committing a thousand little mean-nesses and low actions, far unbecoming any man, much more a governor." Although Calcutta was actually run by two members of the merchants' council and the magistrate, Josiah Holwell, nevertheless, it was Drake who finally provoked the Nawab's attack. Ordered once again to cease fortifying Calcutta, he is alleged to have told the Nawab's emissary that, if his master wanted the moat filled in, it could easily be done by tossing in the heads of the Nawab's own subjects!

The Nawab, still shaky on his throne, could not ignore this rejection of his authority. At the same time, he did not want to antagonize the Hindu merchants and bankers by suppressing English trade. His first act was to threaten the English by blockading their branch agencies and interrupting traffic on the rivers. Then he took the fortified settlement at Kasimbazar, a few miles downriver from his capital at Murshidabad. The English there were taken prisoner but treated well.

The Nawab's only aim was to put pressure on Governor Drake. But the English would not believe that he merely wanted to negotiate. There were rumours of conspiracies. Spies reported that the French were behind everything.

Drake chose to believe nothing – except the one thing that was false. He was con-

Suraj-ud-daula became Nawab of Bengal in 1756, aged 20. Now ruler of India's wealthiest province, this headstrong youth determined to put upstart British traders in their place.



Fort William, the East India Company's fortified warehouse in Calcutta, fell ingloriously to Suraj-ud-daula's troops after a four-day siege.

vinced that Calcutta could hold off any attack long enough for reinforcements to come from Madras. Even the French at Chandernagore believed that the Nawab could not defeat the English and declined an invitation to assist him. The Nawab's army was large but, with the exception of a party of French artillerymen under the command of a French mercenary, unimpressive. The French reported to their superiors at Pondicherry that they had gone to see the Nawab's troops "out of curiosity. Nothing is more pitiable than the way in which they are mounted and supplied. People say that they have only clay bullets." But the French did not tell the English this; instead, they offered them refuge in the fort of Chandernagore. Since the English were convinced that the French were helping the Nawab, they took the offer as another example of French perfidy.

The English would not negotiate, and the Nawab's army moved nearer to Calcutta. On June 15, 1756, he reached the banks of the River Hugli, which runs through Calcutta, and the English fled into Fort William.

Chaos and indecision went with them. No plan of defence had been prepared in advance against such a contingency, and – along with the other defects of Calcutta's defences – there was not a single senior military officer in the throng within the fort who was competent to prepare a defence. Altogether, the English had 515 men – English, Portuguese and Armenian. Hardly any among them "knew the right from the wrong end" of their matchlocks. Soon the Nawab's men were occupying the town, quietly seeping into the houses that surrounded and overlooked the fort. From there they pounded the fort with shot and shell.

The coolies and native matchlockmen had deserted as soon as the enemy began to infiltrate the town. "We had not a black fellow to draw or work a gun, not even to carry a cotton bale or sandbag on ye ramparts. . . . This want of workmen . . . harass'd us prodigiously and prevented our doing several works that would have been necessary." But even with workmen, the English would not have stood a chance. The Nawab's troops came on in waves. His artillery hurled a steady stream of cannon-balls. The few men who had been sent to hold some of the houses round the fort were quickly driven out. The amateur gunners at an outlying battery could have taken their guns back to the fort had they been commanded "by an officer of resolution and judgement." As things turned out, the retreat "had more the appearance of a confused rout," the men "bringing off only one field-piece and the cannon spiked with such little art that they were easily drilled and turned against us."

In the centre of all the chaos, Governor Drake still "imagined from the number of men slain of the enemy, a terror might seize them, and that they would decamp."

But it was Drake who was to decamp. On the morning of June 19, a council of

war decided to evacuate the Eurasian women and children to ships lying downriver from the fort. The European women had gone aboard the day before. Drake, the military commander, and most of the principal merchants determined to go along with the Eurasian women and children. No plans were made. Panic led to the overloading of the boats carrying the women to the ships, and many capsized. "Most of those who had crowded into them were drowned, and such as floated with the tide were either made prisoner or massacred. The enemy along the river bank shot fire arrows into the ships in the hope of burning them."

As the enemy guns kept up their thunderous barrages, the houses round the fort were set on fire. Inside the fort, the remaining English held a hurried meeting, and decided to suspend Drake and the other members of the council who had fled; Josiah Holwell, the magistrate, was appointed Governor.

There was little Holwell could do with barely 170 men. The next day he asked for a truce. Emissaries passed between the two sides. Late in the afternoon of June 20, Holwell was called to the ramparts. "Some of the enemy was advancing with a flag in his hand and called us . . . that we should have quarter if we surrendered." But Holwell insisted on a truce until the Nawab arrived for the English feared that without his backing the surrender terms would be violated.

However, while the parleying went on a turncoat soldier treacherously opened the western gate of the fort and the enemy poured in. For the first time within living memory in Bengal, a fort defended by Europeans had been taken by assault.

The Nawab inspected his new possessions and commented that the English must be fools to oblige him to drive them out of so fine a city. The prisoners were promised that no harm would come to them, and the Nawab's troops were ordered not to loot the town. But the calm did not last. Some of the European soldiers got drunk and began to assault passing Indians. When his subjects complained to the Nawab about their ill-treatment, he asked if there were not some dungeon where defaulters were customarily locked up. He was told that a part of the barracks, known as the

In the sweltering, airless Black Hole, Englishmen captured in the fall of Calcutta struggle like beasts for water passed in hats through the cell bars. Their efforts served only to spill the water and increase their raging thirst. Most died by morning.

"Black Hole," served that purpose. The name "Black Hole" seems now to suggest the horrors to come; in fact, it was the usual term used by the English to describe any garrison lock-up used for confining drunken soldiers, and the name was not abandoned by the army until 1868.

When it was suggested to the Nawab that all the prisoners should be confined there for the night to prevent any of them from escaping, he agreed. And it is reasonable to suppose that he did not know the "Black Hole" to be a room only about 18 feet long and 14 feet wide, with but two air-holes, each of which was strongly barricaded by iron bars.

At 8 p.m., according to Holwell – whose published narrative is the principal source for all accounts of what happened – 146 people, including an Englishwoman, were forced into the Black Hole by soldiers with "clubs and drawn scymitars." Holwell was one of the first to enter. "The rest followed like a torrent, few amongst us, the soldiers excepted, having the least idea of the dimensions or the nature of the place we had never seen; for if we had, we should at all events have rushed upon the guard, and been, as the lesser evil, by our own choice cut to pieces." Holwell stumbled towards the nearest window and grasped an iron bar. The men who could not get near the windows were pushed to the back of the room. Some climbed on to a platform which had originally been built as a sleeping-bench for imprisoned drunken soldiers. Some six feet wide, the platform ran the length of the room and was raised about four feet above the floor. About 20 or 30 prisoners, seeking to escape the mounting pressure from behind, scrambled underneath the platform – only to be imprisoned by those who were jammed into the cell after them.

And now a silent, tortured fight for air began. The instant a man sagged for want of air he was trampled to death. From underneath the long platform came the moans of men rapidly suffocating. In their frenzy some took out their pocket-knives and slashed at the legs of their companions who had been pushed against the platform and now unwittingly starved them of air. But it made no difference. For the unfortunate men who were stabbed, pressed solidly against

The only complete surviving set of elephant armour in the world is this trophy brought from India by Clive and now in the Tower of London along with other Indian weapons.

A secret agent of Clive's, Mr. Watts (right), hatches a plot to destroy Suraj-ud-daula by treachery. With Clive on his way to avenge the Black Hole, General Mir Jafar (left) agrees to defect with 10,000 troops and pay a huge reward if the British help him seize the throne.

their fellows, could not budge, could not give their demented comrades the air their tortured lungs craved.

Holwell, appalled by "the violence of passions, which I saw must be fatal to them," cried out for silence. Next morning, he promised, will "give us air and liberty." Looking at the sea of silenced, terrified faces he warned them that the only hope of survival lay in remaining absolutely calm. Each movement, each outburst of anger, must inevitably diminish their chances, but there was still a chance of life – a chance too of freedom – if they would promise him "to curb as much as possible every agitation of mind and body." His words had no lasting effect. In less than an hour all the survivors were suffering from a raging thirst, and from their desperate need for air.

Someone cried out that there would be more room if everyone took off his clothes, and immediately those able to move started to strip.

"For a little time they flattered themselves with having gained a mighty advantage," but in fact the sweat streaming off the naked men packed so closely together acted as a fatal lubricant. It was more difficult now for the weaker men to remain standing. Before, they had been able to clutch at their neighbours' clothes for support, but now when a fainting man reached out for something to clutch, his fingers merely slithered off slippery skin.

Not every man, however, collapsed on to the floor as he died, for in some corners the prisoners were so tightly packed that they remained wedged upright long after they had suffocated.

Many of the survivors had been thrown into the Hole still wearing their three-cornered hats, and it was not long before one of them had managed to wriggle an arm above his head, lift his hat and start fanning himself. Within a few seconds everyone was fighting desperately to follow his example. Yet this apparently sensible move, too, had disastrous results for soon "every hat was put in motion to produce a circulation of air" and the very effort of waving their hats in the cramped, restricted positions exhausted their energy and made the men sweat more than ever. Soon some, worn out, were unable to get their arms down again, so that several died standing in macabre positions, as though holding up their arms and hats in gestures of farewell.

Holwell clung desperately to his place. "By keeping my face between two of the bars," he recalled, "I obtained air enough to give my lungs easy play, though my perspiration was excessive, and thirst commencing." But already "so strong an urinous volatile effluvia" was pervading the small prison that he found he could no longer turn his head towards the interior of the Black Hole for more than a swift look at what was happening.

Eventually, the men's piteous and insistent cries for "Water! Water!" made an old guard take pity on them. The only containers suitable for distributing the precious liquid were hats which were pushed through the bars so that the guards could fill them. These were almost useless. "Though we brought full hats between the bars, there ensued such violent struggles and frequent contests to get at it that, before it reached the lips of anyone, there would scarcely be a small tea-cup left in them. These supplies, like sprinkling water on fire, only served to feed and raise the flame." Moreover, it soon dawned on the other guards that they could give themselves a novel form of entertainment.

"They took care to keep us supplied with water," Holwell wrote, "that they might have the satisfaction of seeing us fight for it, as they phrased it, and held up lights to the bars that they might lose no part of the inhuman diversion."

After two hours of this, Holwell himself had almost reached the end of his strength. He decided he could hold out no longer and, turning to the survivors, "I called to them and begged, as the last instance of their regard, they would remove the pressure upon me, and permit me to retire out of the window to die in quiet."

He struggled on to the platform, lay down on a pile of corpses, and waited for the end. But now something quite unexpected occurred. Within ten minutes of sinking down on his grisly couch of dead bodies, he was seized with excruciating pains in the chest. Paradoxically, the pains inspired a fierce resolve not to die in this manner. "I instantly deter-

mined to push for the window opposite me; and by an effort of double the strength I ever before possessed," managed to get back to a window. After a few gulps of air his pains began to subside.

Pressed once again against the bars, Holwell now discovered for the first time that he was tortured by thirst. He kept his mouth moist by sucking the perspiration from his clothing, "and catching the drops as they fell like heavy rain from my head and face."

He adds, with some grim humour: "I was observed by one of my miserable companions on the right of me in the expedient of allaying my thirst by sucking my shirt-sleeves. He took the hint and robbed me from time to time of a considerable part of my store. . . . Our mouths and noses often met in the contest. This plunderer was one of the few who escaped from death, and has since paid me the compliment of assuring me he believed he owed his own life to the many comfortable draughts he had from my sleeves!"

Many men had been trying to drink their own urine (including Holwell at one stage), and the stench mingling with the horrible odours from the trampled dead was so overpowering that Holwell dared not move his head from the window for more than a few seconds at a time. All the while, his hold on the bar was endangered by the weight of a very heavy soldier who had clambered on top of him to get near the window. Sooner or later, he knew, he must sink to the floor. He could not last much longer where he was. He decided to return to the platform. This time he was lucky: unconsciousness was swift in coming.

Few details are available to give us any idea of the ensuing hours. Holwell, dead to all appearances, lay all but covered by a pile of corpses.

As dawn approached, less than 30 men were still alive. The survivors, now dazed, exhausted, choking and gasping with the odour of death, begged the guards to open the door. Every plea was refused. Then someone suddenly thought of Holwell. None of the survivors had seen him for hours, but should he still be alive, his appearance at the window might lend authority to their entreaties. Two of them, stumbling over the bodies which lay three or four deep, turned each corpse over until at last they uncovered Holwell's face. The two men half dragged, half carried the magistrate over a carpet of bodies towards the window, shouting in their feeble voices to the others to make room so that they could show the magistrate to the guards.

About this time it seems that Siraj-uddaula first heard of the catastrophe and "sent to enquire if the chief survived." Afterwards, "an order came immediately for our release, it being then near six o'clock." In addition to Holwell, only 22 remained alive after that night of horror.

Such is Holwell's version, and partly as a result of his highly detailed and harrowing description the event grew into one of the great imperial myths. The English historian, Thomas Babington Macaulay, writing in 1840, 84 years after the dreadful event, conjured up a grandiloquent, doom-laden vision of Suraj-uddaula seated, "on the eve of the battle of Plassey, gloriously in his tent, haunted – as the Greek poet would have said – by the furies of those that cursed him with their last breath in the Black Hole."

French ships burn after Clive's sacking of Chandernagore. This battle crippled French power in Bengal and left open the way to Plassey.

The drunkenness lampooned by this cartoon was the only escape from the dreadful heat open to British soldiers and sailors in Bengal.

The reality was not so straightforward. The Black Hole was not a deliberately planned atrocity: Siraj-ud-daula did not know what his order would accomplish. Holwell, it now seems, overestimated the numbers who were packed into the Black Hole: a careful check of the numbers of Europeans surviving the siege – and who thus could have been imprisoned in the Black Hole on the terrible night of June 20, 1756 – reveals only 64.

But even if most people at the time accepted Holwell's version, it was not considered one of the Nawab's major misdeeds. More Europeans died in the siege itself, and certainly the English in Madras were less concerned with revenge than the strategic problems: whether to risk sending troops to Calcutta at all while the French were preparing for war. There were rumours that the French fleet of 19 ships of the line and 3,000 troops aboard had sailed for Pondicherry. Which was more urgent? The need to reinstate English prestige in Bengal, the most profitable source of the Company's trade, or the defence of Madras?

News of the fall of Calcutta reached Madras in the middle of August, 1756. The council at Madras decided to take the risk and send men and ships to retake Calcutta. It was decided that the expedition should include the contingent of royal troops which had arrived recently in Madras. But the professional royal officers despised the Company's soldiers as amateurs and their commander refused to go to Calcutta. Faced with this obstinacy, the Company officers had no choice but to entrust the expedition to Robert Clive. Displaying extraordinary prescience, Clive wrote to his father: "This expedition, if attended with success, may enable me to do great things. It is by far the greatest of my undertakings. I go with great forces and great authority."

These "great forces" – four warships of the Royal Navy, two of the Company's, one fire-ship, 394 European infantry and artillerymen, and 510 native soldiers arrived at Fulta on December 9, 1756, after nearly two months of battling against the monsoon winds in the Bay of Bengal. Clive's instructions were to revenge the defeats, ensure reparation for losses, and see that the Company's trading rights were restored. But those were only the basic requirements of the East India Company. Admiral Watson, who commanded the ships of the Royal Navy, had been told that if he thought it practicable he was to seize the French settlement at Chandernagore, whether war between France and Britain had been declared or not. Clive's ambitions were more extensive. He hoped to do in Bengal what de Bussy had done in Hyderabad – erect a state wholly dependent on the goodwill of the British.

THE WALK-OVER AT PLASSEY

The Battle of Plassey, fought in June, 1757, to avenge the fall of Calcutta, was in itself a petty, almost laughable event, yet it made the British masters of all Bengal. These pages show scenes from a diorama of the battle and present in sequence the Indian forces, the British army and an over-all view of the engagement. They tell with the aid of half-inch models the extraordinary story of how a demoralized army of 50,000 turned and ran before a British force only 3,000 strong.

Riding forward to battle in serried ranks, the 15,000 cavalry of Suraj-ud-daula presented a "grand though terrible prospect" but did little to harm the British.

Wild Indian horsemen (left), armed with pikes and bows and arrows, manœuvre with the magnificent confusion which characterized the Bengal Army, commanded as it was by an incompetent young Nawab and scheming generals.

French gunners (below), sent in answer to Suraj-ud-daula's plea for help, set up "a very warm and brisk fire," reported a British soldier, but "did little execution" for Clive's men took cover till firing stopped.

A war elephant returns to camp with a fatally wounded general, Mir Mudan. One of the few who remained loyal to the Nawab, Mudan's death early in the battle broke the army's will to fight.

The Indian artillery fell easily to British sepoys because the Nawab's troops had neglected to cover their cannon during a pelting rainstorm and the gunpowder had been drenched.

Turbaned sepoys, native soldiers who formed over two-thirds of Clive's East India Company Army, emerge from cover to engage the enemy.

Sailors, supplied from Calcutta by Admiral Watson, man the Royal Navy's howitzers and six-pounders. These were the only guns Clive had, but they were "very well served" and caused heavy enemy casualties.

British casualties were astonishingly light – 18 killed and 45 wounded – owing to Clive's prudent decision to take cover while the Indian artillery bombardment was fiercest.

A drummer sturdily maintains the forward pace of advancing infantry.

Clive's "Few Men of Resolution"

Though hopelessly outnumbered, the British forces – shown on this page – had several crucial advantages. They were not split by dissensions like the Nawab's army. Their stamina was strong: on the day of the battle they rose smartly at 6 a.m., though they had not arrived at Plassey until after midnight and though they had been kept awake all night by the playing of drums and cymbals in the enemy camp. Above all, they were led by a commander tried and proved in battle, Robert Clive. He believed "a few men of resolution" could accomplish miracles against an enemy with low morale. By evening he was to prove it.

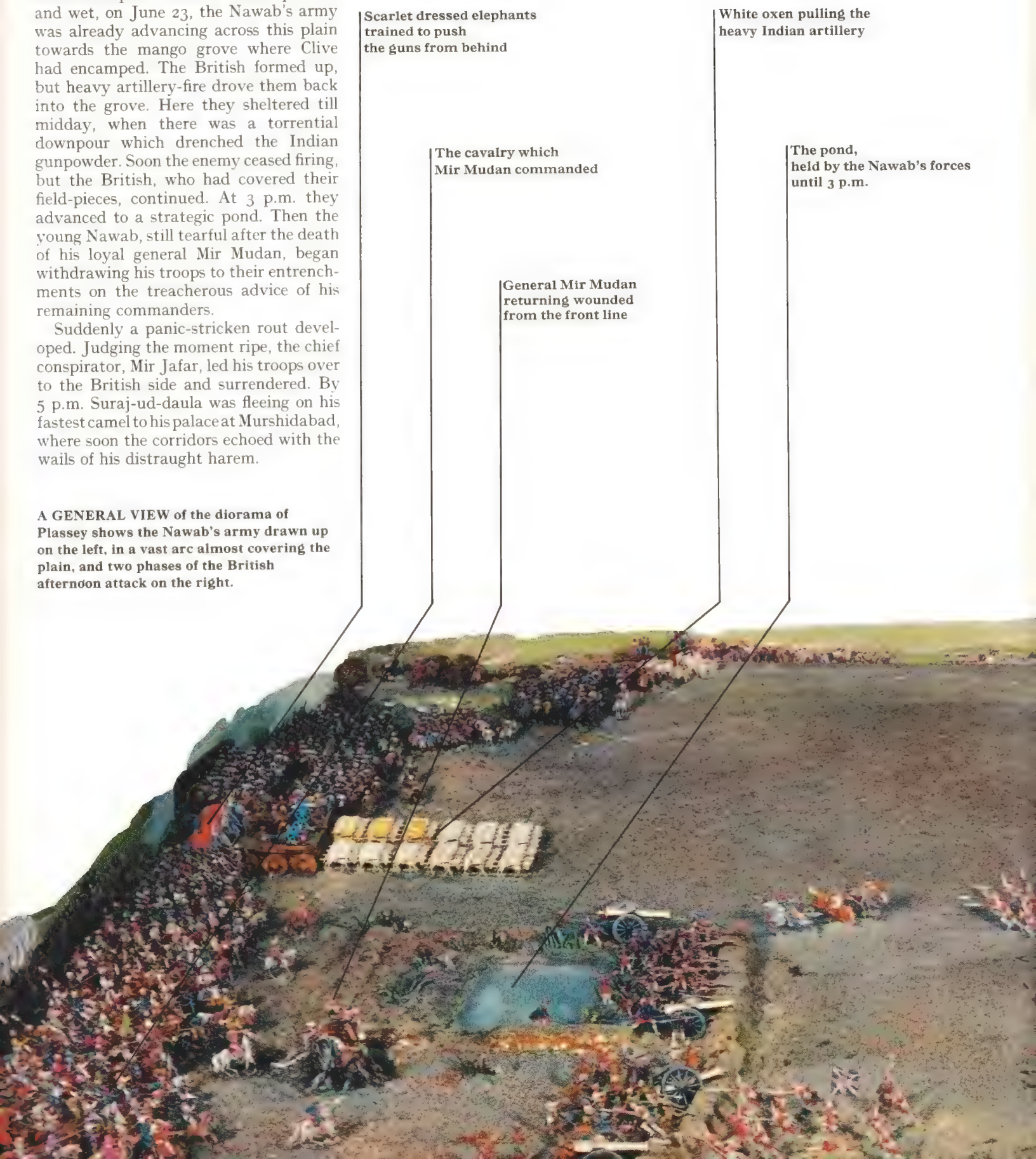
Ordering an advance with covering fire, Major Eyre Coote directs the 225 men of the 39th Foot who were the only regular British infantry to serve at Plassey.

A Battle Unworthy of its Fame

Just by the riverside village of Plassey, there was an extensive plain, reproduced below in the diorama. It lay only 20 miles downstream from Murshidabad, the Nawab's capital. As dawn came up, dank and wet, on June 23, the Nawab's army was already advancing across this plain towards the mango grove where Clive had encamped. The British formed up, but heavy artillery-fire drove them back into the grove. Here they sheltered till midday, when there was a torrential downpour which drenched the Indian gunpowder. Soon the enemy ceased firing, but the British, who had covered their field-pieces, continued. At 3 p.m. they advanced to a strategic pond. Then the young Nawab, still tearful after the death of his loyal general Mir Mudan, began withdrawing his troops to their entrenchments on the treacherous advice of his remaining commanders.

Suddenly a panic-stricken rout developed. Judging the moment ripe, the chief conspirator, Mir Jafar, led his troops over to the British side and surrendered. By 5 p.m. Suraj-ud-daula was fleeing on his fastest camel to his palace at Murshidabad, where soon the corridors echoed with the wails of his distraught harem.

A GENERAL VIEW of the diorama of Plassey shows the Nawab's army drawn up on the left, in a vast arc almost covering the plain, and two phases of the British afternoon attack on the right.



Carrying their colours into battle at Plassey, these men of the 39th Foot initiated a century of co-operation between Crown and Company troops.

Clive rides up to the front line

East India Company troops

British boats, Clive's means of supply and communication with Calcutta

Clive's headquarters, a hunting lodge of the Nawab's

Regular troops of the 39th Foot

The mango grove where the British sheltered in the morning

III. The Spoils of Victory

Events played into Clive's hands. He talked of peace but threatened war. Diplomacy and threat preceded him as he moved upriver. The fort at Budge Budge was captured, somewhat prematurely, by a drunken sailor, who according to Eyre Coote, "having been just served with a quantity of grog had his spirits too much elated to think of taking any rest; he therefore strayed by himself towards the foot, and imperceptibly got under the walls." Without being discovered by the garrison he made his way into the bastion and "discovered several Moor-men sitting on a platform, at whom he flourished his cutlass and fired his pistol, and giving three loud huzzas cried out 'the place is mine'." His comrades heard him and, rushing forward, took the fort with the loss of only four wounded. The sailor, however, was brought before the Admiral for disobeying orders. "If I am flogged for this here action," he is reported to have muttered, "I will never take another fort again as long as I live, by God." He got off with a stiff warning.

Retaking Calcutta was surprisingly easy: the enemy fled after the briefest of bombardments on January 7, 1757.

Calcutta had been recaptured but no real injury had been inflicted on the Nawab. Clive, however, was determined to inflict a humiliating defeat on Suraj-ud-daula, for otherwise the old pattern of threat and squeeze could return.

There was also the matter of reparations for the losses the British had suffered. Fort William was in ruins and most of Calcutta had been burned to the ground by the Nawab's men. The French at Chandernagore also remained a potential menace to the English.

Even more dangerous to Clive's own ambitions was the possibility that he might be recalled to Madras, for the expedition's orders had been to recover Calcutta and then to return and protect the settlements on the Coromandel coast. The news had now arrived that Britain and France were at war in Europe.

What to do next was settled by the Nawab himself, who began to move with his army on Calcutta. Emissaries entered into negotiations but Clive was aware that fighting could resume at any time. And he was further aware that Calcutta, in its present ruined state, could not be defended. He therefore launched a dawn attack on the Nawab's camp on February 6, 1757. This action was described by Clive as "the warmest service I ever yet was engaged in."

The Nawab quickly concluded a peace, promised that the Company's privileges would be restored, and agreed to pay a comparatively small amount of compensation, though nothing for private losses. However, this was adequate – at least until the French had been crushed.

The position of the French was uncomfortable. They would have liked to help the Nawab against the English, but had chosen neutrality in case the English defeated the Nawab. Then they tried secretly to assist the English, in the hope of winning a mutual non-aggression pact, despite the war in Europe.

Clive, however, asked and was granted the Nawab's permission to attack the French (who were in theory tenants of the Nawab) at Chandernagore. Suraj-ud-daula, incensed by the French refusal to help him, felt they deserved to suffer. Furthermore, he feared an invasion of Bengal by Afghans who were ravaging northern India. The Europeans, he felt, should be kept occupied with their own squabbles. Perhaps afterwards, the victor might even help him against the Afghans.

Events thereafter seemed to move slowly through a web of intrigue, of offer and counter-offer – from the French, the Nawab and other interested parties.

The Nawab, learning that the Afghans had moved away from his borders, tried to stop the English from moving against the French. He was quickly disabused of any notion that he could influence the English. Watson sent him a letter which ended in a most menacing manner: "I will kindle a flame in your country as all the water in the Ganges shall not be able to extinguish. Farewell: remember that he promises you this, who never yet broke his word with you or with any man whatsoever." On March 14, the siege of Chandernagore began, to end five days later with the surrender of the French after bitter fighting and heavy losses.

About this time, Clive became aware that there was a conspiracy to overthrow the Nawab. The Hindu merchants and bankers were at the heart of it, and Clive was approached with requests for cooperation. An elderly general, Mir Jafar, was to be placed on the throne, and there would be large sums of money for everybody out of the State Treasury, which was rumoured to hold more than £40 million in gold and jewels. Clive could make a profit for himself and his masters.

The conspiracy came to a head in the renowned, but ridiculous, Battle of Plassey. Clive's forces numbered less than 3,000, the Nawab's over 50,000, but most of Suraj-ud-daula's troops were commanded by men who were involved in the conspiracy. The battle on June 23, 1757, which founded the British Empire in India consisted of two parts: a cannonade in the morning followed by an immense downpour of monsoon rain which damaged the Nawab's ammunition but not that of the English, who had the presence of mind to throw tarpaulins over theirs; then an attack precipitated by the overenthusiasm of an English officer, which ended in complete victory at a cost to the British of 63 casualties. Even the losers were poorer by only about 500 men.

There was, however, nothing minor about the consequences of Plassey. Clive was now a kingmaker, and the plunder of Bengal was there for the taking.

He placed Mir Jafar on the throne, and then Clive and the others collected their

Calcutta's great harbour in the 1760s was the Mecca for rogues

profits. Though the Nawab's Treasury turned out not to contain the fabulous sums everyone had believed, they were still substantial. The Company became landlord of some 880 square miles, mostly south of Calcutta, with rents estimated at £150,000. Clive himself received £234,000, and the senior English merchants between £8,000 and £50,000 each. Together, the Company and private persons netted more than £3 million, the equivalent today of at least 20 times as much. It was plain to all that engineering a revolution was the most profitable game in the world. A lust for gold inflamed the English, and Bengal was to know no peace until they had bled it white.

Clive took a superior view. Other people were avaricious; he himself had merely accepted his just deserts. "Consider the situation in which the battle of Plassey had placed me," he told a Parliamentary Committee which dared in 1772 to criticize his behaviour, "A great prince was dependent on my pleasure; an opulent city lay at my mercy; its richest bankers bid against each other for my smiles; I walked through vaults which were thrown open to me alone, piled on either hand with gold and jewels. Mr. Chairman, at this moment I stand astonished at my own moderation!"

Clive's satisfaction over his success in Bengal was shattered in June, 1758, when news reached Calcutta that Fort St. David at Cuddalore, just south of Pondicherry, had fallen to the French. Clive was astonished. The fort had recently been strengthened. "Were our enemies supplied with wings to fly into the place?" he demanded. Whatever their method had been, the French forces in India numbered more than 4,000 soldiers, who had been brought to India by a powerful fleet. It was to be a different kind of war this time, against a wholly European force instead of native troops stiffened and directed by a few European soldiers and artillerymen. Yet Clive would not send reinforcements to Madras. Bengal was all-important; money and resources would be vital, and that province was "an inexhaustible fund of riches."

Although they had captured Fort St. David, the French in the south were not in a strong position. Dupleix's successor, Thomas, Comte de Lally, had been ordered not only to attack the English, but to clean up the French Company itself, which was riddled with corruption and inefficiency. Lally's arrogant attitude aroused resentment in men who were capable of frustrating his plans. He could not even bank on the co-operation of the French Admiral, who, waving aside Lally's protests, sailed away in August, 1758, and did not return until over a year later. Lally was short of funds, of transport, of gunpowder, of shot – and of success. Though he recalled de Bussy to his aid from Hyderabad, his attempt to capture Madras ended ignominiously when the English fleet returned in February, 1759.

The French position elsewhere was also weak. Clive had sent one of his best officers, Colonel Forde, against de Bussy's deputy, the Marquis de Conflans, who fled with such speed that Forde wrote to Clive: "He is determined not to be taken Prisoner, unless by a Greyhound, for he supped at Rajamindry the night of the Engagement, which is at least 50 miles from the field of action."

One by one the French settlements in the south fell to the English. Lally's army was in open mutiny, and there was no sign of the French fleet. When it did arrive, the English were waiting, and though both sides suffered severely, it was the French Admiral who fled, never to return again. The final end of French hopes came at the Battle of Wandiwash in January, 1760, when Eyre Coote, who had been one of Clive's officers in Bengal, inflicted a decisive defeat. News of this reached Clive when he and his wife were on board the ship that was to take them to England. As it moved down the River Hugli, the ship was "met by an express, despatched from the coast of Coromandel, with advice that Colonel Coote having attacked the French in their entrenchments, the latter were totally defeated with the loss of their cannon and baggage, General Lally wounded, and M. de Bussy and Colonel Murphy taken prisoners." As Clive observed, the English succeeded in doing to the French all that the French, under Dupleix, had set out to do to them.

But though the defeat at Wandiwash was really the end of the French bid for empire, it was by no means the end of the French in India. Pondicherry fell after a long siege in January, 1761, and the English razed the fort to the ground. Peace came at last, two years later, and Lally went back to France to be executed as a scapegoat – "one of those murders," Voltaire commented, "which are committed with the sword of justice."

The French were allowed to return to Pondicherry in 1765. They came back still nursing hopes of retrieving their position in India. To achieve this they counted on the presence at many of the Indian courts of French advisers and military men. These Frenchmen were adventurers certainly, but Frenchmen first.

Conflict broke out again in 1778, when France declared war in support of the rebellious American colonists. On French instigation, the ruler of Mysore, Haidar Ali, launched a campaign against Madras in 1780; with him was a body of French troops under Lally's son. Though Eyre Coote was able to defeat the immense Mysore armies, his victories were partly offset when Haidar's son, Tipu, destroyed an English force of 2,000 troops, killing 500 and taking the rest prisoner. It was the start of the extraordinary rule of Tipu Sahib, "the Tiger of Mysore," who was for 15 years to provide the French with their dying hope that there was one Indian who could crush the English

and adventurers who wished to make fast fortunes.

TIPU THE TIGER OF MYSORE

The last serious challenge to the British presence in India – until modern times – was presented by a man whose extraordinary fantasies brought him world renown: Tipu Sahib, from 1783 to 1799 despotic ruler of the mountainous southern state of Mysore. As a symbol of his ferocity, he made a cult of tigers: iron tigers roared on his cannon, inlaid tigers snarled on his swordhilts, gold tigers supported his throne. After the sack of his capital, Seringapatam, tiger relics – some of which are shown here – were carried home triumphantly to Britain.

The uniform of Tipu's army, modelled here by one of his infantrymen, bore the same pattern as his tigers.

This bronze mortar, cast in the form of a crouching tiger, emulated the power Tipu admired in the real animal. So great was his admiration that he often said he would rather live two days as a tiger than 200 years as a sheep.

Tipu Sahib, though paunchy in middle age, retained some of the appearance of his boyhood – and all the arrogance.

The tiger head above is all that remains of Tipu's tiger-supported throne. Made of gold-plate over wood with teeth of rock-crystal, it is now at Windsor Castle.

Described as "a Royal Tyger in the act of devouring a prostrate European," this life-sized toy seized by the British in 1799 demonstrates, with the aid of mechanical snarls and screams, "the deplorable condition" Tipu wished for his enemies.

At his palace in Seringapatam (left) Tipu maintained numerous impressive servants and, even more impressive, live tigers chained in the courtyards inside.

In this scene from the storming of Bangalore, British officers fall victim to heavy firing from the besieged battlements. Painted by Robert Home, a campaign artist, this canvas was typical of the oil-paint journalism which fed the patriotism of people in Britain.

UNITED SERVICE & ROYAL AERO CLUB

Lord Cornwallis (centre) receives two of Tipu's sons as hostages for the proper observance of the treaty signed under the walls of Seringapatam in 1792.

Drawing The Tiger's Teeth

The British offensive against the Tiger of Mysore was commemorated by a spate of popular paintings, owing to the popular fascination in Europe for all "Tippoo's" doings. It rapidly became clear that Tipu was not quite as terrible as he pretended. His reputation received its first dent in 1791 when the British Grand Army, supplied by a vast convoy of 67 elephants and 26,000 bullocks, stormed Bangalore, one of Tipu's most formidable strongholds. Lord Cornwallis, Governor-General of India, personally commanded the troops, so important did he consider this action. The British came close to disaster through lack of feed for their huge host of baggage animals, but after a fortnight the town fell. Then, early in the following year, Seringapatam itself was besieged and Tipu was forced to sign a humiliating treaty under the walls of his own capital. But, though toothless, the Tiger of Mysore had not yet lost his bite. Seven years later it was necessary for another, even more powerful British army to march up into the mountains of Mysore and lay siege once again to the citadel of Seringapatam.

TIPU'S LAST STAND, dramatically portrayed in this 140-foot-long painting, was made in 1799. After the breakdown of the seven-year-old truce, a British army of 34,000 men descended upon Seringapatam and stormed it within one controversial hour on the afternoon of May 4. Whether he was the victim of treachery or merely of overwhelming numbers of British troops – which has been much debated – Tipu himself was found dying amid the human remains which choked the breached defences. His death ended India's last hope of preventing East India Company control of the whole sub-continent.

IV. The New Mughals

In 1783, it seemed that history was about to repeat itself. De Bussy arrived back in India with 3,000 Frenchmen, and a second French fleet appeared off the coast. But the British survived a number of indecisive sea battles, and de Bussy, old and ill, had lost his military genius. In 1784, Tipu, who had succeeded his father two years earlier, made peace with the English.

More and more Indian rulers bought the services of French officers. The Maratha chiefs – Sindia, in particular – employed many Frenchmen, and a section of his army was commanded by one of them. Most of these men were Royalists, with little or no sympathy for the French Revolution of 1789, but this fact made no difference to Tipu. Tipu needed allies, and Frenchmen were the traditional enemies of the English.

Tipu had not honoured the terms of the Treaty of 1784. He had not given up his English prisoners. Some he had had circumcised and converted to Islam. English children he dressed up as Hindu dancing-girls. But the English feared that, if they took action against him, he would kill all the captives before they could be rescued. Not for nothing did he call himself "the Tiger of Mysore." His instructions to those of his officers engaged on besieging forts were that they should offer the defenders their lives in return for surrender; once the terms had been accepted, the defenders – men, women and children – were to be butchered. The English thought he was mad, and they may well have been right. In 1789 they were at war with him again, a dragging war extended by incompetent commanders, which ended only when the then Governor-General, Lord Cornwallis, a soldier of merit, took over and routed Tipu at his capital of Seringapatam in 1792.

The terms of the peace were harsh. Tipu lost half his territory and promised to pay an immense indemnity.

Badly mauled, the tiger plotted vengeance. In 1797, a shipwrecked Frenchman – a privateer named Ripaud – assured him that there was a large French army ready to embark for India. Ripaud appointed himself Ambassador of the French Republic at the Court of Mysore and founded a Revolutionary Club among the French mercenaries of Tipu's army. All took an oath to "swear hatred to all kings except Tipu Sultan, the Victorious, and the Ally of the French Republic; War to Tyrants, love for our Country and for that of Citizen Tipu."

In 1798 Tipu sent envoys to the Governor of the French island of Mauritius, asking for aid against the British. The Governor made a point of it in one of his proclamations – but all the aid he sent consisted of 150 volunteers. These were, however, enough to raise the gorge of the new Governor-General, Lord Wellesley. To him, all Frenchmen were subversive democrats; "Jacobins" was the word he used, and "Jacobin" at the end of the 18th Century had the same general connotations as "Communist" for right-wingers in the 20th Century.

However much Tipu wriggled, he could not evade the implacable Wellesley whose younger brother, later to be known better as the Duke of Wellington, gained valuable knowledge of warfare in these campaigns. Tipu might welcome the defeat of Napoleon at Aboukir, he might appeal for English clemency, but as the English swept forward the only terms they would consider were complete surrender.

Tipu responded with "mixed indications rather of grief than rage." At a council of war held while the English were at the gates, he cried that "it was better to die like a soldier than to live a miserable dependent on the infidels, in the list of their pensioned rajas." On May 4, 1799, the English stormed the city and Tipu, already desperately wounded, was killed by an English soldier who wanted his gold belt buckle.

With the English paramount in south India and pressing forward in the north, the menace of the French trickled away in minor intrigues and personal ambitions. The English gained their Empire, the French one of history's more pleasant ironies. When British dominion in India came to an end in 1947, Pondicherry – which France had graciously been allowed to keep – survived for seven more years as a remnant of France's Indian empire.

Englishmen like these, listening to an interpreter's report, were by 1800 the recognized heirs to the Mughals.

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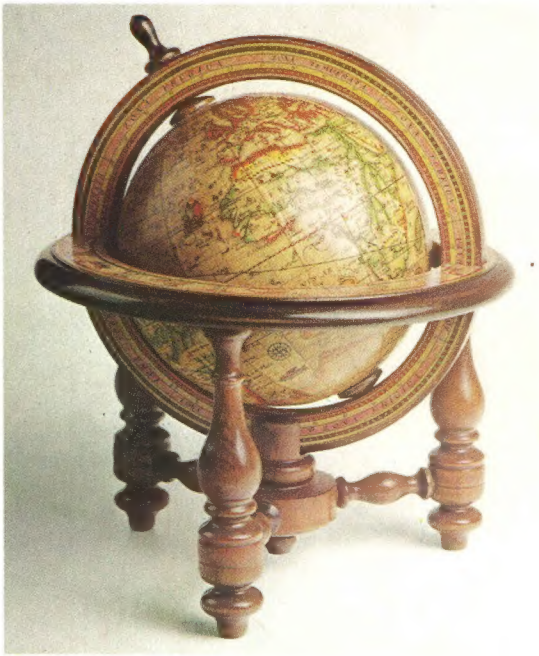

craftsman-made stand of dark, well polished wood. It measures over 9″ in height and approximately 7½″ in overall diameter – the ideal size for displaying on your bookshelves, in a cabinet or wall unit, on your desk or table-top. It looks equally handsome in living-room, study or office, and would naturally make a most impressive gift.

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How the token scheme works

Each week, there are two tokens on the inside front cover of *The British Empire*. This week, there's the second yellow miniatures token and the fourth brown globe token. Each week, you should collect these tokens to take advantage of the exciting offers that are on their way. And every week, as you collect towards the current offer, you'll be getting a start towards the next.

Note: If you miss a token, your newsagent will be able to order the appropriate back number of *The British Empire* for you.

All offers applicable to the British Isles only.

To: Globe Offer, 17 Thame Park Road, Thame, Oxon. Please send me a reproduction antique globe.
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Officer, 5th Horse (later 4th Irish Dragoon Guards), 1695